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Descripti n

This invention relates to electronic devices, and is more particularly concerned with an electronic key-like device containing an electronic circuit, and a receptacle for receiving the device and establishing electrical contact with the electronic circuit.

In our United Kingdom Patent application No. 8401932 (Publication No. 2153573A), there is described and claimed a prepayment electricity metering system in which an electronic key containing a memory co-operates with a receptacle in an electricity meter to control the supply of electricity to a consumer. Prior art electronic keys suitable for use in such a context are typically designed to be used in a manner similar to that in which a conventional mechanical key is used, ie they are designed to be inserted into the receptacle, and then turned (or rotated) in the receptacle to establish the required electrical contact: such a prior art electronic key and receptacle combination is disclosed in EP-A-43145, in which rotation of the key also serves to lock the key against withdrawal from the receptacle while electrical contact is established. Although this prior art key and receptacle combination has the merit of being familiar to, and therefore readily understandable by, consumers using electronic keys for the first time, it has the disadvantage that the key and receptacle are mechanically more complex, and therefore more expensive to make, than is strictly necessary.

It is one object of the present invention to provide an electronic key-like device and receptacle which are relatively simple and inexpensive to manufacture on a mass production basis, while still being easy to use.

According to one aspect of the present invention, there is provided the combination of an electronic key-like device containing an electronic circuit, with a receptacle for receiving the device and establishing electrical contact with the electronic circuit, wherein:

the device comprises a head portion, and a body portion adapted to be inserted into the receptacle, the body portion comprising guide means extending parallel to the direction of insertion of the body portion and a plurality of electrical contacts which are electrically connected to respective circuit points in the electronic circuit; and

the receptacle includes a keyway shaped to receive the body portion of the device while preventing the body portion from rotating within the keyway about the direction of insertion, means arranged to co-operate with the guide means on the body portion to guide the body portion into the keyway during insertion, and a plurality of electrical contacts each positioned to contact a respective one of the device contacts when the body portion

is fully inserted into the keyway;

characterised in that:

the receptacle further includes biasing means arranged to bias said body portion towards one side of the keyway on insertion; and

the receptacle and the body portion are provided with respective co-operating locating means which are urged into engagement with each other by the biasing means when the body portion is fully inserted into the keyway, one of said locating means comprising a recess and the other comprising a projection which fits into the recess, the locating means on the body portion being positioned between the head portion and the remainder of the body portion of the device, and the receptacle locating means being disposed on said one side of the keyway.

In a preferred embodiment of the invention, the recess is provided in the body portion of the device, and the projection is provided in the receptacle. In this case, the body portion of the device is preferably elongate in the direction of insertion, with a first pair of oppositely disposed side surfaces interconnected by a second pair of oppositely disposed side surfaces whose width, perpendicular to the direction of insertion, is significantly less than that of the first pair, and the recess is preferably disposed in one side surface of the first pair.

Advantageously, the recess is an elongate recess which extends perpendicular to the direction of insertion. However, the length of the recess is preferably less than the width of said one side surface, and the recess preferably does not reach either edge of said one side surface.

Conveniently, the guide means on the body portion includes at least one groove in each side surface of the first pair, the grooves being respectively disposed such that the body portion can be inserted into the receptacle in one orientation only. This can be achieved, for example, by providing a plurality of parallel grooves in said one side surface, and one groove in the opposite side surface. In this case, each of said plurality of grooves in said one side surface preferably contains at least one of said device contacts. Preferably, one of the device contacts is arranged to make contact with its respective receptacle contact, during insertion of the device, only after all the other device contacts have made contact with their respective device contacts.

Alternatively, the guide means may comprise at least one groove in each side surface of the first pair, the grooves being respectively disposed such that the body portion can be inserted into the receptacle in either of two orientations which differ from each other by 180° of rotation of the body portion about its longitudinal axis (ie the axis ex-

tending in the direction of insertion), and each side surface of the first pair may be provided with a respective one of said recesses, each recess being positioned to co-operate with the projection in the receptacle in a respective one of said orientations. In this case, it is preferably arranged that the groove or grooves in one of said side surfaces contains a first set of said device contacts, the receptacle contacts each being positioned to contact a respective device contact of the first set when the body portion is inserted into the receptacle in one of said orientations, and the groove or grooves in the other of said side surfaces contains a second set of said device contacts, each device contact of the second set being connected to a respective one of the device contacts of the first set and being positioned such that when the body portion is inserted into the receptacle in the other orientation, each receptacle contact contacts the device contact of the second set connected to the device contact of the first set contacted by that receptacle contact when the body portion is inserted into the receptacle in said one orientation. Preferably, one device contact of the first set and the device contact of the second set connected to said one device contact of the first set are both arranged to make contact with their respective receptacle contact, during insertion of the device, only after all the other device contacts of the respective set have made contact with their respective receptacle contacts.

In one embodiment of the invention, the biasing means comprises spring-biased closure means arranged to close the entrance to the keyway in the absence of the body portion.

The invention will now be described, by way of example only, with reference to the accompanying drawings, of which:

Figure 1 is a plan view of one embodiment of an electronic key-like device in accordance with the present invention;

Figure 2 is a view of part of the underside of the key of Figure 1;

Figures 3 and 4 are sectional views of the device of Figure 1;

Figure 5 is a front view of a receptacle for receiving the device of Figures 1 to 4;

Figure 6 is a sectional view of the receptacle of Figure 5.

Figure 7 is a plan view of an alternative embodiment of the key-like device of Figure 1, also in accordance with the present invention; Figures 8 and 9 and side end views respectively of the device of Figure 7.

The key-like device of Figures 1 to 4 is indicated generally at 10, and comprises a head portion 12 by which the device is held by its user, and a body portion 14 shaped to be inserted into a

corresponding receptacle of the kind which will be described hereinafter with reference to Figures 5 and 6. The head portion 12 and body portion 14 are integrally moulded in one piece is a suitable plastics material, for example an anti-static thermoplastics material such as that available under the trade name STATCON.

Encapsulated within the head portion 12 is a small printed circuit board (not shown), on which is mounted at least one integrated circuit, typically a 256 bit or 1 kilobit EPROM. Also mounted on the printed circuit board are several miniature surface-mounted components, typically a diode, a capacitor and about six resistors, to protect the integrated circuit from damage by electrostatic discharge. To further protect the integrated circuit from such electrostatic discharge, the plastics material from which the device 10 is moulded is loaded with carbon.

The body portion 14 is elongated in the direction of insertion, and substantially rectangular in cross-section, with a first pair of oppositely-disposed parallel side surfaces 16, 18 interconnected by a second pair of oppositely-disposed parallel side surfaces 20, 22. The width of the side surfaces 16, 18 perpendicular to the direction of insertion of the device 10 is typically about 1.3 cm, whereas the width of the side surfaces 20, 22 in the direction of insertion is significantly less, typically just under 0.5cm.

The free end 23 of the body portion 14 (ie the end remote from the head portion 12) is tapered, to facilitate insertion into the aforementioned receptacle.

The side surface 16 is provided with four grooves 24, which extend parallel to the direction of insertion of the device 10, and are uniformly spaced apart and symmetrically disposed across the width of the side surface 16. The side surface 18 has a single groove 26, which is parallel to the grooves 24, and disposed along the centre line of the side surface 18. All the grooves 24, 26 run out into the tapered end 23 of the body portion 14, and the groove 26 is longer (ie extends closer to the head portion 12) than the grooves 24. The side surface 16 is also provided, between the head portion 12 and the grooves 24, with a transversely extending recess or groove 27, which is symmetrically disposed between the opposite edges of the side surface 16 and does not reach these edges.

The grooves 24 each contain in their respective bases two longitudinally spaced electrical contacts 28 and 30, as can best be seen in Figure 2: the contacts 28 are the ones nearer the tapered end 23 of the body portion 14, while the contacts 30 are the ones nearer the head portion 12. As can also be seen in Figure 2, the four contacts 28 are aligned with each other perpendicular to the direction of insertion, as are the four contacts 30. How-

ever, one of the contacts 30, indicated at 30a, is shorter than all the other contacts 28 and 30, typically being only half their length. The trailing edge of the contact 30a, is the edge which enters the aforementioned receptacle last during insertion, is aligned with the respective trailing edges of the other contacts 30, so that the leading edge of the contact 30a is typically aligned with about the middle of the length of the other contacts 30.

The contact 30a is electrically connected within the device 10 to the contact 28 in the same groove 24, while the other contacts 28 and 30 are electrically connected within the device 10 to respective circuit points on the aforementioned encapsulated printed circuit board: the precise details of these connections, and of the circuitry on the printed circuit board, are not relevant to the present invention, and so will be omitted for the sake of simplicity.

The receptacle of Figures 5 and 6 is indicated generally at 40, and comprises a generally box-like housing 42 having an opening 44 at one end. The width of the opening 44 is substantially equal to the width of the side surfaces 16, 18 of the body portion 14 of the device 10 of Figures 1 to 3. The opening 44 communicates with the interior of the housing 42, this interior forming a keyway 45 shaped to receive the body portion 14 of the device 10.

The housing 42 is moulded in a suitable plastics material, and comprises a main housing member 46 defining the top 48, the side walls 50 and the rear wall 52 of the housing. The base of the housing 42 is made up of three interlocking base members 56, 58, 60, moulded in the same plastics material as the rest of the housing 42.

The first base member 56 extends the whole length of the housing 42, and its rear end (ie the end nearer the rear wall 52 of the housing) has a rearward projection 62 which rests on a ledge 64 projecting forwardly from the rear wall 52 of the housing. The base member 56 also has a first set of four contact slots 66, aligned with each other across the width of the keyway 45, through which respective electrical contacts 68, also aligned with each other across the width of the keyway, project into the keyway, and a second set of four similarly aligned contact slots 70 through which four more similarly aligned electrical contacts 72 project into the keyway: the contacts 68 are nearer the rear wall 52 of the housing 42, while the contacts 72 being nearer the opening 44. The slots 66, 70 and contacts 68, 72 are positioned such that the contacts 68 are aligned with and thus contact the contacts 28 on the body portion 14 of the device 10 when the body portion is fully inserted into the keyway 45, while the contacts 72 are aligned with and contact the contacts 30, as will hereinafter become apparent.

The underside of the base member 56 is provided with a deep centrally-disposed recess 74 into which the slots 66 and 70 open, while the underside of the portion of the base member 56 between this recess and the front end of the base member is provided with four deep parallel grooves 76. The upper surface of the base member 56 is provided, closely adjacent its front end, with an upward projection 78 which extends across the central part of the width of the opening 44 in the housing 42.

The contacts 68 and 72 are each made from a short length of resilient wire, one end of which is bent to form an inverted V-shaped portion 68a or 72a which projects through the respective slot 66 or 70 into the keyway 45 and constitutes the contact proper. The other ends 72b of the wires forming the contacts 72 pass through respective ones of the grooves 76 in the underside of the first base member 56, and are soldered into a printed circuit board 79.

The second base member 58 has a forward portion 80 which seats against the underside of the front end of the first base member 56, and a rearward portion 82 which seats in the forward half of the recess 74. The upper surface of the forward portion 80 is provided with locating spigots 84, which project into respective ones of the grooves 76, and hold the ends 72b of the contacts 72 in these grooves. The undersurface of the base member 58 has four parallel grooves 86, which receive respective ones of the other ends 68b of the wires forming the contacts 68: these wire ends 68b are also soldered into the printed circuit board 79.

The third base member 60 has a forward portion 88 which seats against the underside of the second base member 58, and a rearward portion 90 which seats in the rearward half of the recess 74. The upper surface of the forward portion 88 is provided with locating spigots 92, which project into respective ones of the grooves 86, and hold the ends 68b of the contacts 68 in the grooves. The underside of the rearward portion 90 of the base member 60 is provided with two rearwardly extending, integrally formed, resilient catch members 94, which underlie and support the rear end of the base member 56, and pass under the rear wall 52 of the housing 42 to engage its outside surface. All three base members 56, 58, 60 are clamped together by two pairs of resilient catch members 96, which extend downwardly from and are integral with the side walls 50 of the housing 42.

The opening 44 is closed by a flap 98, which is pivotally mounted on a pin 100 extending transversely across the top of the opening between the side walls 50 of the housing. The flap 98 is biased towards the closed position, in which its lower edge abuts the rear edge of the projection 78 at the front end of the base member 56, by a spring 102.

Additionally, the flap 98 is provided with a rectangular-section projection 104 which extends from near its top edge to its bottom edge, down its centre line. The cross-section of the projection 104 is shaped to correspond with that of the groove 26 in the side face 18 of the body portion 14 of the device 10.

In use, the receptacle 40 is typically incorporated within the housing of an electricity metering system of the kind described in our aforementioned application no. 8401932, with the opening 44 readily accessible from the front of the housing, but with the printed circuit board 79 disposed inside the housing. The printed circuit board 79 has mounted thereon all or part of circuitry similar to that described in our aforementioned application, and to gain access to electricity, a consumer merely inserts the device 10, with its encapsulated circuitry appropriately loaded with data as described in the aforementioned application, into the receptacle 40.

To achieve this, the body portion 14 of the device 10 is inserted through the opening 44 in the receptacle 40 with its side surface 18 uppermost, over the top of the projection 78. The tapered free end 23 of the body portion 14 facilitates insertion, and lifts the flap 98 against the action of the spring 102. Since, as already mentioned, the width of the opening 44 is substantially equal to the width of the side surfaces 16, 18 of the body portion 14, the body portion tends to centre itself in the width of the keyway 45. As a result, the projection 104 engages in the groove 26 in the upper side face 18, and guides the body portion 14 into the keyway 45 such that each pair of corresponding receptacle contacts 68 and 72 enters a respective one of the grooves 24 in the lower side surface 16 of the body portion 14. The flap 98 and spring 102 act to bias the body portion 14 downwardly, so that when the body portion is fully inserted into the keyway 45, the whole body portion is pushed down to cause the projection 78 to enter the recess 27, thus locking the device 10 in the receptacle 40 and establishing good electrical contact between the device contacts 28, 30 and the receptacle contacts 68, 72.

It will be appreciated that because of the shortening of the device contact 30a in relation to all the other device contacts 28 and 30, all the other device contacts 28 and 30 tend to make contact with their respective receptacle contacts 68 and 72 during insertion before the device contact 30a makes contact with its receptacle contact 72. The position of the device contact 30a in relation to the recess 27 is such that the device contact 30a makes contact with its receptacle contact 72 when the recess 27 drops down over the projection 78.

The contact 68 of the pair of receptacle con-

tacts 68, 72 which enter the groove 24 containing the shorted-together device contacts 28 and 30a is repeatedly interrogated, eg by pulsing it, by the circuitry within the metering system. The other contact 72 of this pair is simultaneously checked, on the occurrence of each pulse, to see if the pulse appears at this other contact via the shorted-together contacts 28 and 30a of the device 10. When the pulse does so appear, it thus is an indication that the body portion 14 of the device 10 is indeed fully inserted into the receptacle, and only then are the appropriate ones of the other receptacle contacts 68 and 72 energised to establish communication between the circuitry of the metering system and the circuitry encapsulated within the device 10.

To remove the device 10 from the receptacle 40 of the metering system, it is merely necessary to lift the head portion 12 a little, thus raising the body portion 14 within the keyway 45 against the action of the spring-biased flap 98 and disengaging the recess 27 from the projection 79. The body portion 14 of the device 10 can then simply be withdrawn from the keyway 45.

It will be appreciated that the device 10 and receptacle 40 are relatively simple to make and to use. This is largely due to the fact that the device 10 does not need to be rotated within the receptacle 40, but can simply be pushed straight in and pulled straight out. However, the integrity of the electrical connection between the device contacts 28, 30 and the receptacle contacts 68, 72 is assured firstly by the positive location provided by the engagement of the recess 27 and the projection 78 upon full insertion of the body portion 14 into the keyway 45, and secondly by the ability to test electrically that full insertion has occurred via the shorted-together contacts 28 and 30a.

The key-like device of Figures 7 to 9 has several features in common with the device 10 of Figures 1 to 5. These common features have therefore been given the same reference numerals as were used in Figures 1 to 5, and only the points of difference will be described in detail.

Thus the device of Figures 7 to 9 is indicated generally at 110, and comprises a head portion 12 and a body portion 14 of the same general kind as those of the device 10 of Figure 1 to 5: in particular, the body portion 14 has a side surface 16 containing four grooves 24 substantially identical to those of the device 10, and containing electrical contacts 28 and 30 substantially identical to those of the device 10. However, the side surface 18 of the body portion 14, instead of containing a single centrally disposed groove corresponding to the groove 26 of the device 10, contains four more grooves 124 substantially identical in form and distribution to the grooves 24, and containing contacts 128 and 130 dimensioned and distributed

substantially identically to the contacts 28 and 30.

Each of the contacts 128 and 130 is connected within the device 110 to the respective one of the contacts 28, 30 which occupies the position which the electrode 128 or 130 would occupy if the device 110 were rotated through 180° about the longitudinal axis of the device, indicated at X in Figures 7 to 9: this is best illustrated in Figure 9, where four pairs of connected-together contacts are given the references C1 to C4.

Additionally, as well as having the transversely extending recess 27 in its side surface 16, the device 110 has an identical recess 127 in its side surface 18, in a position exactly corresponding to that of the recess 27.

The result of these differences is that the device 110 can be inserted into the receptacle 40 in either of two orientations separated by 180° of rotation about its longitudinal axis X, i.e. with either its side surface 16 or its side surface 18 facing upwardly. In other words, from the viewpoint of the receptacle 40, the device 110 looks mechanically and electrically identical in these two orientations. The only modification required to be made to the receptacle 40 is the replacement of the single projection 104 on the flap 98 with four parallel projections (not shown) shaped and positioned to engage in the grooves 24 or 124 as the device 110 is inserted into the receptacle.

Claims

1. The combination of an electronic key-like device (10) containing an electronic circuit, with a receptacle (40) for receiving the device and establishing electrical contact with the electronic circuit, wherein:

the device comprises a head portion (12), and a body portion (14) adapted to be inserted into the receptacle, the body portion comprising guide means (26) extending parallel to the direction of insertion of the body portion and a plurality of electrical contacts (28, 30) which are electrically connected to respective circuit points in the electronic circuit; and

the receptacle includes a keyway (45) shaped to receive the body portion of the device while preventing the body portion from rotating within the keyway about the direction of insertion, means (104) arranged to co-operate with the guide means on the body portion to guide the body portion into the keyway during insertion, and a plurality of electrical contacts (68, 72) each positioned to contact a respective one of the device contacts when the body portion is fully inserted into the keyway;

characterised in that:

the receptacle further includes biasing

means (98, 102) arranged to bias said body portion towards one side of the keyway on insertion; and

the receptacle and the body portion are provided with respective co-operating locating means (78, 27) which are urged into engagement with each other by the biasing means when the body portion is fully inserted into the keyway, one of said locating means comprising a recess (27) and the other comprising a projection (78) which fits into the recess, the locating means on the body portion being positioned between the head portion and the remainder of the body portion of the device, and the receptacle locating means being disposed on said one side of the keyway.

2. The combination of claim 1, characterised in that the recess (27) is provided in the body portion (14) of the device (10), and the projection (78) is provided in the receptacle (40).

3. The combination of claim 2, characterised in that:

the body portion (14) of the device (10) is elongate in the direction of insertion, and has a first pair of oppositely disposed side surfaces (16, 18) interconnected by a second pair of oppositely disposed side surfaces (20, 22) whose width, perpendicular to the direction of insertion, is significantly less than that of the first pair; and

the recess (27) is disposed in one side surface (16) of the first pair.

4. The combination of claim 3, characterised in that the body portion (14) of the device (10) is substantially rectangular in cross-section.

5. The combination of claim 3 or claim 4, characterised in that said recess (27) is an elongate recess which extends perpendicular to the direction of insertion.

6. The combination of claim 5, characterised in that the length of the recess (27) is less than the width of said one side surface (16), and the recess does not reach either edge of said one side surface.

7. The combination of any one of claims 3 to 6, characterised in that the guide means (26) on the body portion (14) includes at least one groove (26) in a side surface (18) of the first pair.

8. The combination of claim 7, characterised in that the guide means (24, 26) on the body

- portion (14) includes at least one groove (24 or 26) in each side surface (16, 18) of the first pair, the grooves being respectively disposed such that the body portion can be inserted into the receptacle (40) in one orientation only. 5
9. The combination of claim 8, characterised in that the guide means on the body portion includes a plurality of parallel grooves (24) in said one side surface (16), and one groove (26) in the opposite side surface (18). 10
10. The combination of claim 9, characterised in that each of said plurality of grooves (24) in said one side surface (16) contains at least one of said device contacts (28, 30). 15
11. The combination of any preceding claim, characterised in that one of the device contacts (30a) is arranged to make contact with its respective receptacle contact (72), during insertion of the device (10), only after all the other device contacts (28, 30) have made contact with their respective receptacle contacts (68, 72). 20
12. The combination of claim 11, characterised in that the end of said one device contact (30a) which first makes contact with its respective receptacle contact (72) during insertion is closer to the head portion (12) of the device (10) than are the corresponding ends of the other device contacts (28, 30). 25
13. The combination of claim 11 or claim 12, characterised in that said one device contact (30a) is directly connected to another of said device contacts (28). 30
14. The combination of claim 7, characterised in that the guide means (24, 124) comprises at least one groove (24, 124) in each side surface (16, 18) of the first pair, the grooves being respectively disposed such that the body portion (14) can be inserted into the receptacle (40) in either of two orientations which differ from each other by 180° of rotation of the body portion about its longitudinal axis, and each side surface of the first pair is provided with a respective one of said recesses (27, 127), each recess being positioned to co-operate with the projection (78) in the receptacle in a respective one of said orientations. 35
15. The combination of claim 14, characterised in that the groove or grooves (24) in one of said side surfaces (16) contains a first set of said device contacts (C1 to C4, Figure 9), the receptacle contacts (68, 72) each being positioned to contact a respective device contact of the first set when the body portion (14) is inserted into the receptacle (40) in one of said orientations, and the groove or grooves (124) in the other of said side surfaces (18) contains a second set of said device contacts (C1 to C4, Figure 9), each device contact of the second set being connected to a respective one of the device contacts of the first set and being positioned such that when the body portion is inserted into the receptacle in the other orientation, each receptacle contact contacts the device contact of the second set connected to the device contact of the first set contacted by that receptacle contact when the body portion is inserted into the receptacle in said one orientation. 40
16. The combination of claim 15, characterised in that one device contact (30a) of the first set and the device contact (130) of the second set connected to said one device contact (30a) of the first set are both arranged to make contact with their respective receptacle contact (72), during insertion of the device (10), only after all the other device contacts (28, 30, 128, 130) of the respective set have made contact with their respective receptacle contacts (68, 72). 45
17. The combination of claim 16, characterised in that the end of said one device contact (30a) of the first set which first makes contact with its respective receptacle contact during insertion, and the corresponding end of the device contact (130) of the second set connected to said one device contact of the first set, are both closer to the head portion (12) of the device (110) than are the corresponding ends of the other device contacts. 50
18. The combination of claim 16 or claim 17, characterised in that said one device contact (30a) of the first set is directly connected to another device contact (28) of the first set. 55
19. The combination of any one of claims 1 to 18, characterised in that the biasing means (98, 102) comprises closure means (98) biased by a spring (102) to close the entrance to the keyway (45) in the absence of the body portion (14).
20. The combination of any one of the preceding claims, characterised in that the receptacle contacts (68, 72) are resilient, and project into the keyway (45) from said one side thereof to make resilient sliding contact with the device

contacts (28, 30).

21. The combination of claim 20, wherein each receptacle contact (68, 72) comprises a wire which projects into the keyway (45) from said one side thereof, is inclined along the keyway generally in the direction of insertion of the device, and has its projecting end (68a, 72a) bent over to extend back towards said one side of the keyway.

Patentansprüche

1. Die Kombination eines schlüsselähnlichen einen elektronischen Schaltkreis enthaltenden elektronischen Geräts (10) mit einem Aufnehmer (40) für die Aufnahme des Geräts und Herstellung elektrischen Kontakts mit dem elektronischen Schaltkreis, bei der

das Gerät einen Kopfabschnitt (12) und einen Korpusabschnitt (14) umfaßt, der in den Aufnehmer einführbar ist, wobei der Korpusabschnitt Führungsmittel (26) umfaßt, die sich parallel zur Einfügerichtung des Korpusabschnitts erstrecken, sowie eine Mehrzahl elektrischer Kontakte (28, 30) umfaßt, die elektrisch verbunden sind mit entsprechenden Schaltungspunkten in dem elektronischen Schaltkreis, und

wobei der Aufnehmer einen Schlüsselkanal (45) umfaßt, geformt zur Aufnahme des Korpusabschnitts des Geräts, während der Korpusabschnitt an der Drehung innerhalb des Schlüsselkanals um die Einfügerichtung gehindert wird, Mittel (104), die angeordnet sind zum Zusammenwirken mit den Führungsmitteln auf dem Korpusabschnitt zum Führen des Korpusabschnitts in den Schlüsselkanal während des Einfügens, und eine Mehrzahl elektrischer Kontakte (68, 72), die jeweils positioniert sind zum Kontaktieren eines zugeordneten der Gerätekontakte, wenn der Korpusabschnitt vollständig in den Schlüsselkanal eingefügt ist, dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß der Aufnehmer ferner Vorspannmittel (98, 102) aufweist, angeordnet zum Vorspannen des Korpusabschnitts in Richtung einer Seite des Schlüsselkanals beim Einfügen, und

der Aufnehmer und der Korpusabschnitt jeweils mit zusammenwirkenden Positioniermitteln (78, 27) versehen sind, die in Eingriff miteinander drückbar sind durch die Vorspannmittel, wenn der Korpusabschnitt vollständig in den Schlüsselkanal eingefügt ist, wobei eines der Positioniermittel eine Ausnehmung (27) und das andere einen Vorsprung (78) umfaßt, der in die Ausnehmung paßt, welche Positioniermittel auf dem Korpusabschnitt zwischen

dem Kopfabschnitt und dem Rest des Korpusabschnitts des Geräts positioniert sind, und die aufnehmerseitigen Positioniermittel auf der erwähnten einen Seite des Schlüsselkanals angeordnet sind.

2. Die Kombination nach Anspruch 1, dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß die Ausnehmung (27) in dem Korpusabschnitt (14) des Geräts (10) vorgesehen ist und der Vorsprung (78) in dem Aufnehmer (40) vorgesehen ist.

3. Die Kombination nach Anspruch 2, dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß der Korpusabschnitt (14) des Geräts (10) in Einfügerichtung langgestreckt ist und ein erstes Paar voneinander abgekehrt angeordneten Seitenoberflächen (16, 18) umfaßt, die miteinander verbunden sind durch ein zweites Paar voneinander abgekehrten Seitenoberflächen (20, 22), deren Breite senkrecht zur Einfügerichtung deutlich kleiner ist als diejenige des ersten Paares, und daß die Ausnehmung (27) in einer Seitenoberfläche (16) des ersten Paares angeordnet ist.

4. Die Kombination nach Anspruch 3, dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß der Korpusabschnitt (14) des Geräts (10) im wesentlichen rechteckig im Querschnitt ist.

5. Die Kombination nach Anspruch 3 oder Anspruch 4, dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß die Ausnehmung (27) eine langgestreckte Ausnehmung ist, die sich senkrecht zur Einfügerichtung erstreckt.

6. Die Kombination nach Anspruch 5, dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß die Länge der Ausnehmung (27) geringer ist als die Breite der einen Seitenoberfläche (16), und daß die Ausnehmung keine Kante der einen Seitenoberfläche erreicht.

7. Die Kombination nach einem der Ansprüche 3 bis 6, dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß die Führungsmittel (26) auf dem Korpusabschnitt (14) mindestens eine Nut (26) in einer Seitenoberfläche (18) des ersten Paares umfassen.

8. Die Kombination nach Anspruch 7, dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß die Führungsmittel (24, 26) auf dem Korpusabschnitt (14) mindestens eine Nut (24 oder 26) in jeder Seitenoberfläche (16, 18) des ersten Paares umfassen, welche Nuten jeweils so angeordnet sind, daß der Korpusabschnitt in den Aufnehmer (40) in nur einer Richtung einfügbar ist.

9. Die Kombination nach Anspruch 8, dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß die Führungsmittel auf dem Korpusabschnitt eine Mehrzahl paralleler Nuten (24) in der einen Seitenoberfläche (16) und eine Nut (26) in der gegenüberliegenden Seitenoberfläche (18) umfassen. 5
10. Die Kombination nach Anspruch 9, dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß jede der Mehrzahl von Nuten (24) in der einen Seitenoberfläche (16) mindestens einen der geräteseitigen Kontakte (28, 30) enthält. 10
11. Die Kombination nach einem der vorangehenden Ansprüche, dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß einer der geräteseitigen Kontakte (30a) ausgebildet ist zum Kontaktieren mit seinem zugeordneten aufnehmerseitigen Kontakt (72) während des Einfügens des Geräts (10), nachdem alle anderen geräteseitigen Kontakte (28, 30) Kontakt mit ihren jeweiligen geräteseitigen Kontakten (68, 72) erreicht haben. 15 20
12. Die Kombination nach Anspruch 11, dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß das Ende des einen geräteseitigen Kontakts (30a), der zuerst Kontakt mit dem zugeordneten aufnehmerseitigen Kontakt (72) während des Einfügens macht, dichter an dem Kopfabschnitt (12) des Geräts (10) liegt als die entsprechenden Enden der anderen geräteseitigen Kontakte (28, 30). 25 30
13. Die Kombination nach Anspruch 11 oder Anspruch 12, dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß der eine geräteseitige Kontakt (30a) direkt verbunden ist mit einem anderen der geräteseitigen Kontakte (28). 35
14. Die Kombination nach Anspruch 7, dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß die Führungsmittel (24, 124) mindestens eine Nut (24, 124) in jeder Seitenoberfläche (16, 18) des ersten Paares umfassen, welche Nuten jeweils derart angeordnet sind, daß der Korpusabschnitt (14) in den Aufnehmer (40) in einer von zwei Orientierungen einfügbar ist, die sich voneinander durch 180° Drehung des Korpusabschnitts um seine Längsachse unterscheiden, und daß jede Seitenoberfläche des ersten Paares mit einer zugeordneten der Ausnehmungen (27, 127) versehen ist, wobei jede Ausnehmung positioniert ist für das Zusammenwirken mit dem Fortsatz (78) des Aufnehmers in einer entsprechenden der Orientierungen. 40 45 50
15. Die Kombination nach Anspruch 14, dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß die Nut oder Nuten (24) in einer der Seitenoberflächen (16) einen er-

sten Satz der geräteseitigen Kontakte (C1 bis C4, Figur 9) enthält beziehungsweise enthalten, wobei die aufnehmerseitigen Kontakte (68, 72) jeder positioniert sind zum Kontaktieren eines zugeordneten geräteseitigen Kontaktes des ersten Satzes, wenn der Korpusabschnitt (14) in den Aufnehmer (40) in einer der genannten Orientierungen eingefügt wird und die Nut oder Nuten (124) in der anderen der Seitenoberflächen (18) einen zweiten Satz der geräteseitigen Kontakte (C1 bis C4, Figur 9) enthält beziehungsweise enthalten, wobei jeder geräteseitige Kontakt des zweiten Satzes verbunden ist mit einem zugeordneten der geräteseitigen Kontakte des ersten Satzes und so positioniert sind, daß, wenn der Korpusabschnitt in den Aufnehmer in der anderen Orientierung eingefügt wird, jeder aufnehmerseitige Kontakt den geräteseitigen Kontakt des zweiten Satzes kontaktiert, der verbunden ist mit dem geräteseitigen Kontakt des ersten Satzes, welcher von dem aufnehmerseitigen Kontakt kontaktiert wird, wenn der Korpusabschnitt in den Aufnehmer in der ersten Orientierung eingefügt ist.

16. Die Kombination nach Anspruch 15, dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß ein geräteseitiger Kontakt (30a) des ersten Satzes und der geräteseitige Kontakt (130) des zweiten Satzes, der mit dem genannten einen geräteseitigen Kontakt (30a) des ersten Satzes verbunden ist, jeweils ausgebildet sind zum Kontaktieren ihres zugeordneten aufnehmerseitigen Kontakts (72) während des Einfügens des Geräts (10) erst dann, wenn alle anderen geräteseitigen Kontakte (28, 30, 128, 130) des jeweiligen Satzes mit den zugehörigen aufnehmerseitigen Kontakten (68, 72) in Kontakt getreten sind. 55
17. Die Kombination nach Anspruch 16, dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß das Ende des genannten einen geräteseitigen Kontakts (30a) des ersten Satzes, der zuerst in Kontakt tritt mit dem zugeordneten aufnehmerseitigen Kontakt während des Einfügens und das entsprechende Ende des geräteseitigen Kontakts (130) des zweiten Satzes, verbunden mit dem genannten einen geräteseitigen Kontakt des ersten Satzes, jeweils dichter an dem Kopfabschnitt (12) des Geräts (110) liegen als die entsprechenden Enden der anderen geräteseitigen Kontakte. 50

18. Die Kombination nach Anspruch 16 oder Anspruch 17, dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß der genannte eine geräteseitige Kontakt (30a) des ersten Satzes direkt verbunden ist mit einem

anderen geräteseitigen Kontakt (28) des ersten Satzes.

19. Die Kombination nach einem der Ansprüche 1 bis 18, dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß die Vorspannmittel (98, 102) Schließmittel (98) umfassen, die von einer Feder (102) vorgespannt sind zum Sperren des Schlüsseloches für den Schlüsselkanal (45) bei Abwesenheit des Korpusabschnitts (14). 5
20. Die Kombination nach einem der vorangehenden Ansprüche, dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß die aufnehmerseitigen Kontakte (68, 72) federnd sind und in den Schlüsselkanal (45) von der genannten einen Seite desselben ragen zum Herbeiführen eines federnden Gleitkontakts mit den geräteseitigen Kontakten (28, 30). 10
21. Die Kombination nach Anspruch 20, bei der jeder aufnehmerseitige Kontakt (68, 72) einen Draht umfaßt, der in den Schlüsselkanal (45) von der genannten einen Seite desselben hineinragt, abgewinkelt ist längs des Schlüsselkanals generell in Richtung des Einfügens des Geräts und sein abragendes Ende (68a, 72a) zurückgebogen hat, so daß es sich nach rückwärts erstreckt in Richtung der genannten einen Seite des Schlüsselkanals. 15

Revendications

1. Combinaison d'un dispositif (10) de type clé électronique contenant un circuit électronique avec un réceptacle (40) pour recevoir le dispositif et établir un contact électrique avec le circuit électronique, dans laquelle: 35
 - le dispositif comprend une partie de tête (12), et une partie de corps (14) adaptée à être insérée dans le réceptacle, la partie de corps comprenant un moyen de guidage (26) s'étendant parallèlement à la direction d'insertion de la partie de corps et une pluralité de contacts électriques (28, 30) qui sont électriquement connectés à des points respectifs du circuit électronique; et 40
 - le réceptacle comporte un logement de clé (45) ayant une forme permettant de recevoir la partie de corps du dispositif tout en empêchant la partie de corps de tourner à l'intérieur du logement de clé autour de la direction d'insertion, un moyen (104) agencé adapté à coopérer avec le moyen de guidage sur la partie de corps pour guider la partie de corps dans le logement de clé pendant l'insertion, et une pluralité de contacts électriques (68, 72) tous disposés pour être en contact avec l'un res-

pectif des contacts du dispositif lorsque la partie de corps est entièrement insérée dans le logement de clé;

caractérisée en ce que:

le réceptacle comporte en outre un moyen à ressort (98, 102) adapté à solliciter ladite partie de corps vers un côté du logement de clé lors de l'insertion; et en ce que

le réceptacle et la partie de corps sont munis de moyens de positionnement respectifs (78, 27) coopérant avec ceux-ci, qui sont repoussés pour s'engager les uns sur les autres par le moyen à ressort lorsque la partie de corps est entièrement insérée dans le logement de clé, l'un desdits moyens de positionnement comprenant un évidement (27) et l'autre comprenant une protubérance (78) qui s'ajuste dans l'évidement, le moyen de positionnement de la partie de corps étant placé entre la partie de tête et le reste de la partie de corps du dispositif, et le moyen de positionnement du réceptacle étant disposé sur ledit côté du logement de clé. 20

2. Combinaison selon la revendication 1, caractérisée en ce que l'évidement (27) est réalisé dans la partie de corps (14) du dispositif (10), et en ce que la protubérance est réalisée sur le réceptacle (40). 25
3. Combinaison selon la revendication 2, caractérisée en ce que:
 - la partie de corps (14) du dispositif (10) est allongée dans la direction d'insertion et comporte une première paire de surfaces latérales (16, 18) opposées l'une à l'autre et reliées entre elles par une seconde paire de surfaces latérales (20, 22) opposées l'une à l'autre, dont la largeur, perpendiculairement à la direction d'insertion, est sensiblement inférieure à celle de la première paire; et en ce que 30
 - l'évidement (27) est disposé dans une surface latérale (16) de la première paire.
4. Combinaison selon la revendication 3, caractérisée en ce que la partie de corps (14) du dispositif (10) présente une section transversale sensiblement rectangulaire. 35
5. Combinaison selon la revendication 3 ou 4, caractérisée en ce que ledit évidement (27) est un évidement allongé qui s'étend perpendiculairement à la direction d'insertion. 40
6. Combinaison selon la revendication 5, caractérisée en ce que la longueur de l'évidement (27) est inférieure à la largeur de ladite surfac 45

- latérale (16) et en ce que l'évidement n'atteint aucun des deux bords de ladite surface latérale.
7. Combinaison selon l'une quelconque des revendications 3 à 6, caractérisée en ce que le moyen de guidage (26) sur la partie de corps (14) comporte au moins une rainure (26) dans une surface latérale (18) de la première paire. 5
 8. Combinaison selon la revendication 7, caractérisée en ce que le moyen de guidage (24, 26) sur la partie de corps (14) comporte au moins une rainure (24 ou 26) dans chaque surface latérale (16, 18) de la première paire, les rainures étant respectivement disposées de telle manière que la partie de corps puisse être insérée dans le réceptacle (40) suivant une seule orientation. 10
 9. Combinaison selon la revendication 8, caractérisée en ce que le moyen de guidage sur la partie de corps comporte une pluralité de rainures parallèles (24) dans ladite surface latérale (16) et une rainure (26) dans la surface latérale opposée (18). 15
 10. Combinaison selon la revendication 9, caractérisée en ce que chacune de ladite pluralité de rainures (24) dans ladite surface latérale (16) contient au moins l'un desdits contacts de dispositif (28, 30). 20
 11. Combinaison selon l'une quelconque des revendications précédentes, caractérisée en ce que l'un des contacts (30a) du dispositif est adapté à établir un contact avec son contact de réceptacle respectif (72), pendant l'insertion du dispositif (10), seulement après que tous les autres contacts de dispositif (28, 30) aient établi un contact avec leurs contacts de réceptacle respectifs (68, 72). 25
 12. Combinaison selon la revendication 11, caractérisée en ce que l'extrémité dudit contact de dispositif (30a) qui établit un premier contact avec son contact de réceptacle respectif (72) pendant l'insertion, est plus proche de la partie de tête (12) du dispositif (10) que les extrémités correspondantes des autres contacts de dispositif (28, 30). 30
 13. Combinaison selon la revendication 11 ou 12, caractérisée en ce que ledit contact de dispositif (30a) est directement connecté à un autre desdits contacts de dispositif (28). 35
 14. Combinaison selon la revendication 7, caracté-

risée en ce que le moyen de guidage (24, 124) comprend au moins une rainure (24, 124) dans chaque surface latérale (16, 18) de la première paire, les rainures étant respectivement disposées de façon à ce que la partie de corps (14) puisse être insérée dans le réceptacle (40) suivant l'une de deux orientations différenciant l'une de l'autre d'une rotation de 180° de la partie de corps autour de son axe longitudinal, et en ce que chaque surface latérale de la première paire est munie de l'un respectif desdits évidements (27, 127), chaque évidement étant positionné pour coopérer avec la protubérance (78) dans le réceptacle suivant l'une respective desdites orientations.

15. Combinaison selon la revendication 14, caractérisée en ce que la rainure ou les rainures (24) dans l'une desdites surfaces latérales (16) contient ou contiennent un premier jeu desdits contacts de dispositif (C1 à C4, figure 9), les contacts de réceptacle (68, 72) étant tous positionnés pour établir un contact avec un contact de dispositif respectif du premier jeu lorsque la partie de corps (14) est insérée dans le réceptacle (40) suivant l'une desdites orientations, et en ce que la rainure ou les rainures (124) dans l'autre desdites surfaces latérales (18) contient ou contiennent un second jeu desdits contacts de dispositif (C1 à C4, figure 9), chaque contact de dispositif du second jeu étant connecté à l'un respectif des contacts de dispositif du premier jeu et étant positionné de façon à ce que, lorsque la partie de corps est insérée dans le réceptacle suivant l'autre orientation, chaque contact de réceptacle établisse un contact avec le contact de dispositif du second jeu connecté au contact de dispositif du premier jeu avec lequel ce contact de réceptacle établit un contact lorsque la partie de corps est insérée dans le réceptacle suivant ladite orientation. 40

16. Combinaison selon la revendication 15, caractérisée en ce qu'un contact de dispositif (30a) et le contact de dispositif (130) du second jeu connecté audit contact de dispositif (30a) du premier jeu sont tous deux adaptés à établir un contact avec leur contact de réceptacle respectif (72) pendant l'insertion du dispositif (10), seulement après que tous les autres contacts de dispositif (28, 30, 128, 130) du jeu respectif aient établi un contact avec leurs contacts de réceptacle respectifs (68, 72). 45

17. Combinaison selon la revendication 16, caractérisée en ce que l'extrémité dudit contact de dispositif (30a) du premier jeu, qui établit un

premier contact avec son contact de réceptacle respectif pendant l'insertion, et l'extrémité correspondante du contact de dispositif (130) du second jeu connecté audit contact de dispositif du premier jeu, sont toutes deux plus proches de la partie de tête (12) du dispositif (110) que les extrémités correspondantes des autres contacts de dispositif.

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18. Combinaison selon la revendication 16 ou la revendication 17, caractérisée en ce que ledit contact de dispositif (30a) du premier jeu est directement connecté à un autre contact de dispositif (28) du premier jeu.

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19. Combinaison selon l'une quelconque des revendications 1 à 18, caractérisée en ce que le moyen à ressort (98, 102) comprend un moyen de fermeture (98) sollicité par un ressort (102) pour fermer l'entrée du logement de clé (45) en l'absence de la partie de corps (14).

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20. Combinaison selon l'une quelconque des revendications précédentes, caractérisée en ce que les contacts de réceptacle (108, 72) sont élastiques et pénètrent dans le logement de clé (45) par l'un desdits côtés de celui-ci pour établir un contact coulissant élastique avec les contacts de dispositif (28, 30).

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21. Combinaison selon la revendication 20, dans laquelle chaque contact de réceptacle (68, 72) comprend un fil qui pénètre à l'intérieur du logement de clé (45) par l'un desdits côtés de celui-ci, qui est incliné le long du logement de clé, globalement dans la direction d'insertion du dispositif, et dont l'extrémité faisant saillie (68a, 72a) est recourbée vers l'arrière et vers ledit côté du logement de clé.

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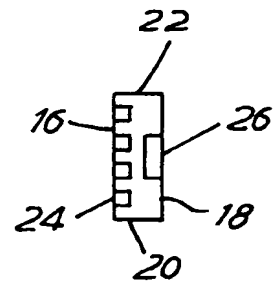
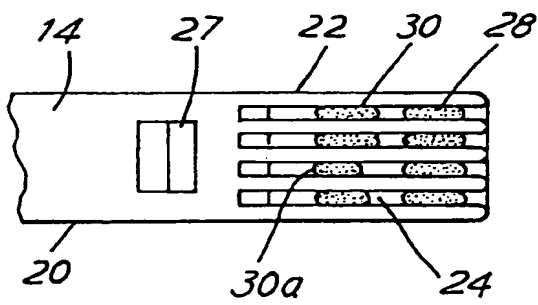
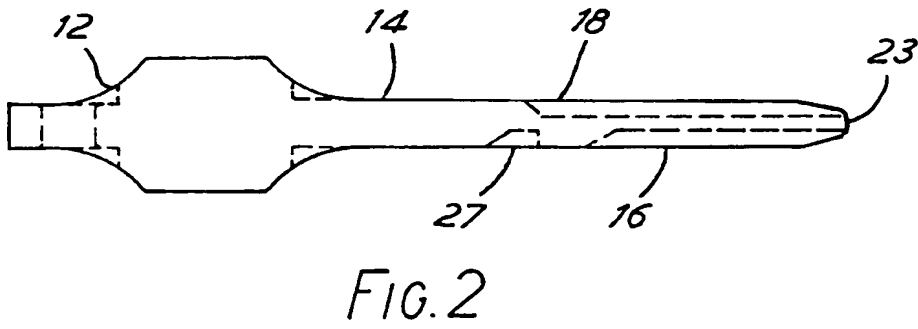
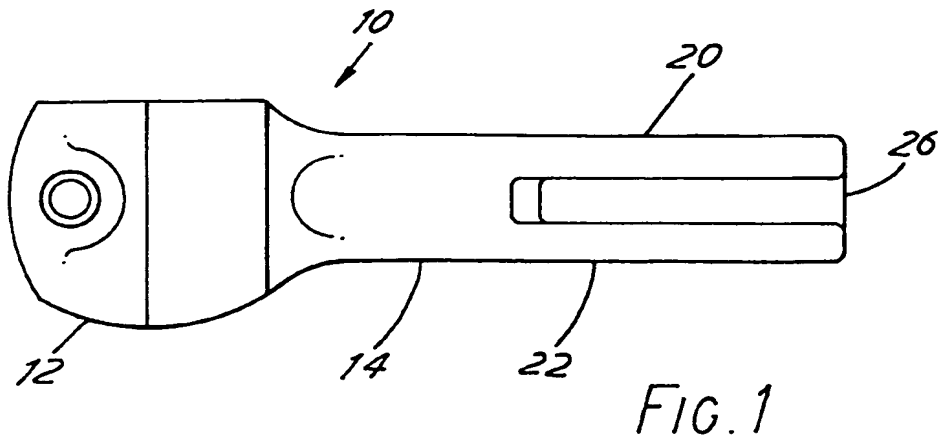
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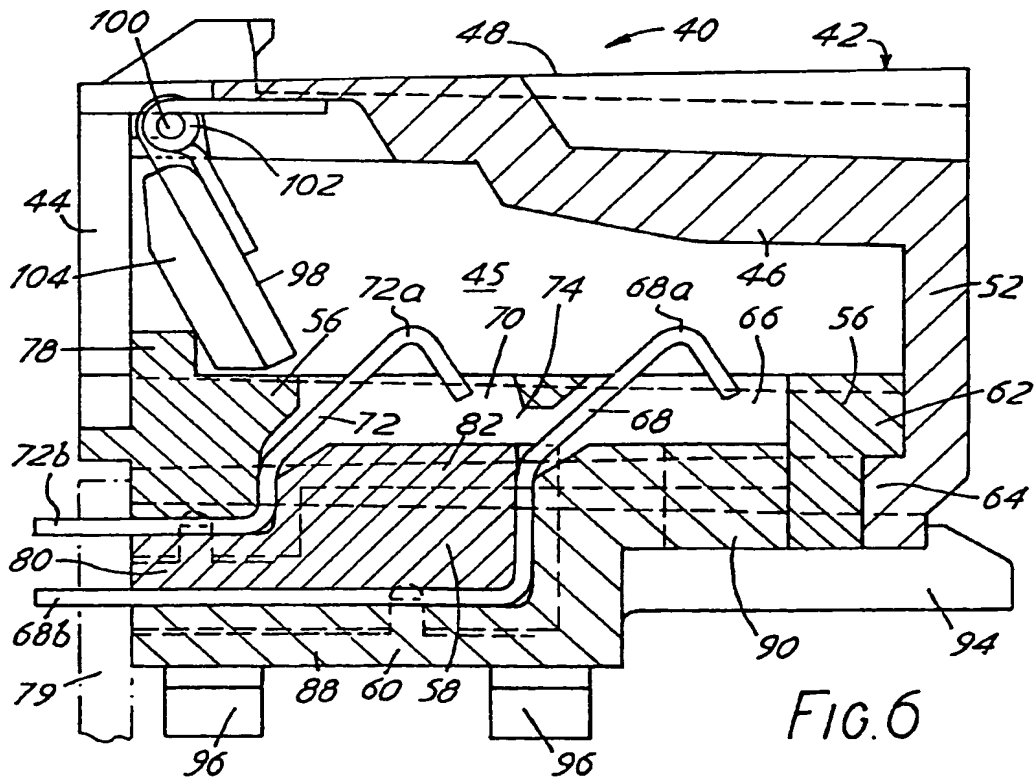
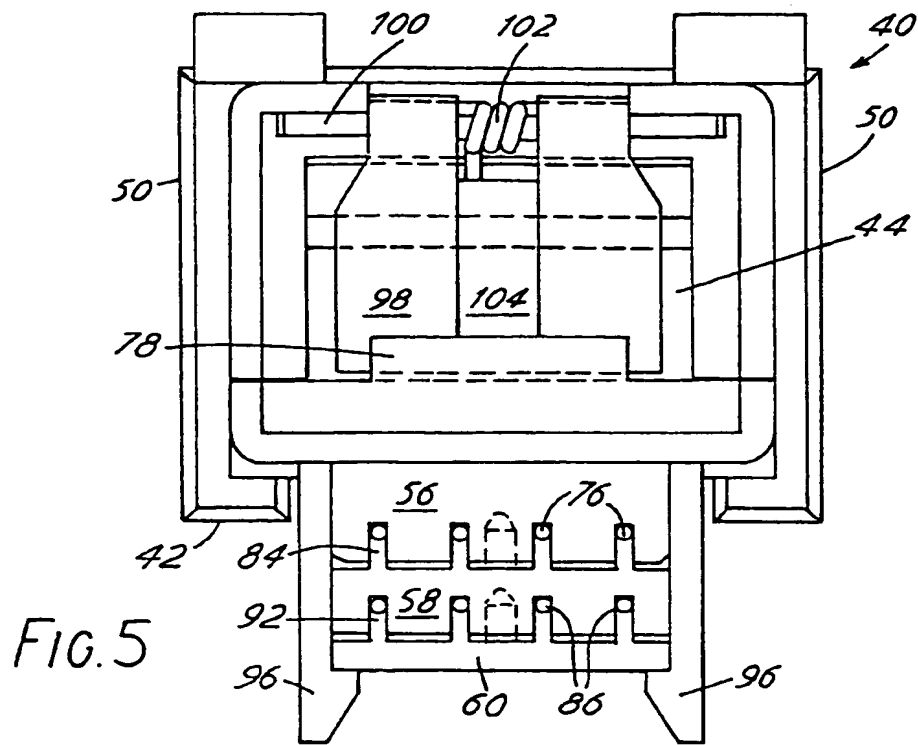
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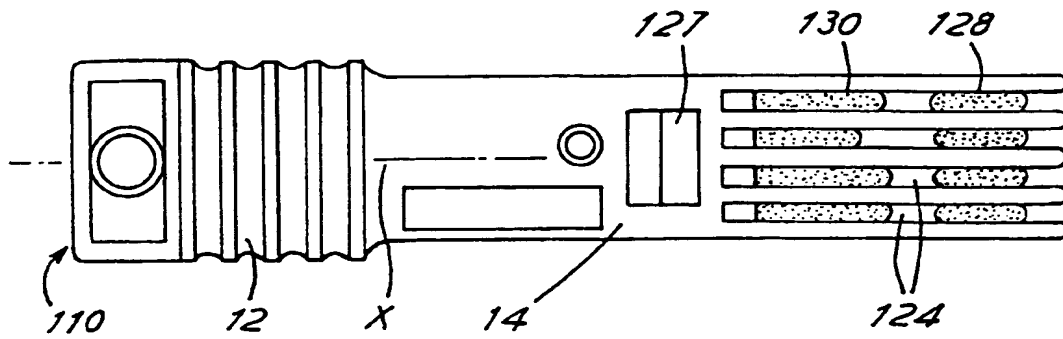


FIG. 7

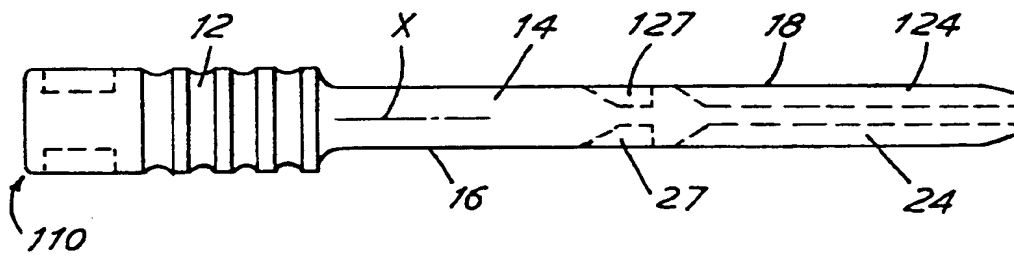


FIG. 8

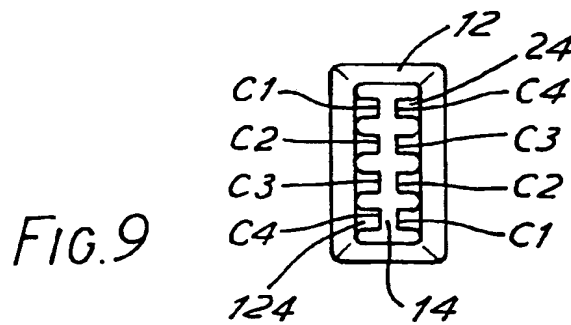


FIG. 9